

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 159992

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINR, CH, JA

SUBJECT: JAPAN'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE PRC, SHOJI SATO

REFERENCE: TOKYO 9749

1. FOLLOWING INFORMATION SUPPLEMENTS COMMENTS IN REFERENCE
ON NEW JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO THE PRC, SHOJI SATO. A
HIGHLY RESPECTED CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER, SATO COMES
TO HIS CHINA ASSIGNMENT FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN TOKYO,
WHERE HE HAD SERVED SINCE AUGUST 1975 AS VICE MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE TOP BUREAUCRATIC POST IN THE MINISTRY.
SATO IS WELL LIKED AND RESPECTED WITHIN THE FOREIGN OFFICE,
AND OBSERVERS GENERALLY AGREE THAT HE PERFORMED WELL AS
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VICE MINISTER, BOTH AS A MANAGER OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY
AND AS A "POLITICIAN" IN DEALING WITH OTHER MINISTRIES AND
WITH THE DIET.

2. SATO SUPPORTS JAPAN'S BASIC POLICY OF MAINTAINING
FAVORABLE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, AND AS
ADMINISTRATIVE VICE MINISTER HE TOOK PAINS TO DEMONSTRATE

INTEREST IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE US EMBASSY. SATO BELIEVES JAPAN SHOULD GO ITS OWN WAY IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZES THAT ITS DIPLOMATIC INDEPENDENCE IS LIMITED BECAUSE "WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER"

AND BECAUSE JAPAN, A RESOURCE-POOR NATION DEPENDENT ON WORLD TRADE, MUST MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES.

3. DURING HIS CAREER SATO SERVED A NUMBER OF TOURS IN THE TREATIES BUREAU. HE WAS INVOLVED IN THE DRAFTING OF SEVERAL IMPORTANT TREATIES AND COMMUNIQUE, INCLUDING THE DECLARATION ESTABLISHING JAPANESE-SOVIET DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (1957) AND THE US-JAPAN OKINAWA REVERSION COMMUNIQUE (1967). THIS BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN TREATIES MATTERS MAY ALLOW SATO TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN SOLVING THE HEGEMONY CLAUSE PROBLEM THAT HAS STALLED THE SIGNING OF A JAPAN-PRC TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP.

4. SATO WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 15, 1913, IN PUSAN, SOUTH KOREA. A GRADUATE OF TOKYO IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY, HE JOINED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN 1939, AND DURING MOST OF WORLD WAR II HE SERVED IN PARIS (1940-44); HE WAS ASSIGNED TO THE JAPANESE EMBASSY IN BERLIN AT THE TIME GERMANY SURRENDERED. IN LATE 1950 SATO RETURNED TO EUROPE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AT ITS OVERSEAS AGENCY AT THE

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HAGUE, AND HE WAS APPOINTED SECOND SECRETARY THERE IN APRIL 1952, WHEN FORMAL DIPLOMATIC TIES WERE REESTABLISHED BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE NETHERLANDS. SATO WAS A SECTION HEAD IN THE TREATIES BUREAU FROM 1953 UNTIL 1958, WHEN HE BEGAN A 3-YEAR TOUR AS CONSUL GENERAL IN GENEVA. HE WAS MINISTER TO FRANCE DURING 1966-67.

5. SATO'S MORE RECENT FOREIGN MINISTRY EXPERIENCE HAS INCLUDED ASSIGNMENTS AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE TREATIES BUREAU (1967-70), DEPUTY VICE MINISTER FOR ADMINISTRATION IN THE MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT (1970-73), AND AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN (1973-75).

6. CHEERFUL AND FRIENDLY BY NATURE, SATO IS A VERSATILE SPORTSMAN. HE ALSO PLAYS BRIDGE AND POKER. SATO ENJOYS MUSIC AND ART AND CONSIDERS HIMSELF LUCKY TO HAVE HAD ASSIGNMENTS IN FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS AND SPAIN, WHERE HE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE SOME OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST PAINTINGS. HE SPEAKS FRENCH, AND ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTANDS ENGLISH WELL, HIS SPEAKING ABILITY IS LIMITED. FOR THIS REASON HE USES AN INTERPRETER, THOUGH HE IS EMBARRASSED ABOUT THIS NECESSITY.

7. SATO AND HIS WIFE, MASAKO, HAVE TWO SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS. SATO'S BROTHER, ASAO, WAS CHIEF SECRETARY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN SAPPORO IN FEBRUARY 1972.

8. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING ANY INFORMATION ON SATO WHICH BECOMES AVAILABLE DURING HIS TOUR IN PEKING. VANCE

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